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DE RUEHDM #0286/03 1061432  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 161432Z APR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6264  
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 7584  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 1052  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 5129  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3883  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 2375  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 8063  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0525  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0494  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0147  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0281  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI PRIORITY 0236  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0596  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0679  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 DAMASCUS 000286

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA, EEB/ESC/TFS; NSC FOR  
SHAPIRO/MCDERMOTT; COMMERCE FOR BIS/CHRISTINO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/16/2019

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GE](#) [SP](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: MFA REQUESTS EMBASSY HELP FOR SYRIAN AIR

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\* Missing Section 001 \*  
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\* Missing Section 002 \*  
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DAMASCUS 00000286 003.2 OF 003

¶9. (C) Charge advised Miqdad and Abdullatif that it was unlikely that Syrian Air's desire for new aircraft could be justified on humanitarian grounds, and would be better addressed as a political issue. She suggested that the Syrians should raise this issue with Washington visitors who want to have political discussions in Damascus, and reminded them that Ambassador Mustafa is also in position to raise it in his meetings in Washington.

¶10. (C) Miqdad acknowledged the Charge's point, and said he would raise it with FM Muallim. He also asked the Charge to convey the Syrians' desire to purchase new aircraft in her report on this meeting to Washington in order to start the discussion as soon as possible. "It's good to have these kinds of frank discussions," Miqdad said. "We hope this meeting will facilitate a good beginning."

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Conveying a Request to Meet Again  
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¶11. (C) The Charge next informed Miqdad of the proposed visit A/S-designate Feltman and NSC Senior Director Shapiro to Syria on April 27. Miqdad responded that the proposal was "excellent news," but expressed concern that "no one" would be available to meet with the delegation on April 27. (Note:

FM Muallim may be accompanying President Asad to Austria for meetings on April 27-28. End note.) He promised to convey the request to FM Muallim and respond by April 16 with an alternative date if April 27 is, in fact, not possible.

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Comment  
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¶12. (C) Abdullatif's frank description of Syrian Air's "priorities" paints an even grimmer picture of the airline's desperate condition than our internal assessments had indicated. Although we were aware of the two engines requiring maintenance from Lufthansa Technik, this was the first we had heard of the 15 engines needing service from IAE or the three Honeywell APUs. Notably absent from Syrian Air's presentation was any discussion of the two export licenses to recondition the Boeing 747-SPs. Laying their cards on the table, the Syrian regime has uncharacteristically acknowledged its need for our help. They will see our response as a metric by which to gauge the seriousness of our desire to engage them.  
CONNELLY